

Note: These minutes are a draft and are not to be considered official until approved at the next meeting.

Poweshiek County 911 Board Meeting Minutes for May 30, 2023

This meeting was held in person and via Zoom

Members Present: Ruth Moore-New Sharon, Rusty Massengale-Malcom, Tom Kriegel-PSAP, Gary Sears-Gilman, Kurt Hall-Brooklyn, Joel Kercheval-Montezuma, Weston Widmer-Deep River, Derek Kriegel-Hartwick

Dawn Disney-Addressing/Database Mgr. @ Public Safety Building

Via Zoom: Brian Paul-EMA, Jason Roudabush-Poweshiek County, Fred Foreman-Searsboro

Members Absent: Grinnell, Barnes City, Chelsea, Sully, Belle Plaine, Victor, Midwest Ambulance

Guests: Patrick Duffy-Grinnell, Andy Widmer-Deep River, Les Taylor-Brooklyn, Tanner Meldrem-Brooklyn, Spencer Meldrem-Brooklyn, Troy Meldrem-Brooklyn, Joe Meyer-Sheriff's Office, Bill Bolen-Montezuma

Via Zoom:
Jacob Patterson-Gilman

Call to order and Roll Call

Massengale called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. - Members present as listed above.

Approval of Agenda

Motioned by Sears to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Roudabush. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes from May 1, 2023

Motioned by Paul to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Moore. Motion carried.

Business Items

Courthouse Panic Alarm/Radio -

Meyer, Dispatcher Supervisor, advised that the radio is in, and that there was a mix up and that they sent it back to instead of to Racom but it has been installed since Thursday. All the alarms are connected to it and it works. The only issue is that it is on the talk-around group, which means that it only transmits from the antenna up at the courthouse instead of at the Sheriff's Office to the repeater and out. So, the further away from the courthouse that you get the less it is able to be understood. On Thursday night Joel is going to go remove the radio, take it down to Racom on Friday morning and they are going to reprogram it and then get it back up here Friday morning and everything should be working correctly.

Massengale asked if anyone had anything more on that, and there were no questions or comments.

Zuercher Software

Meyer, Dispatch Supervisor, advised that Galyn Nook, Poweshiek County IT, is working with Grinnell P.D.'s IT guy and that they are looking at using a VPN tunnel, so they would logon here through that to the internet at the Sheriff's Office to get away from the current internet issues that we've been having. The system that is there is completely obsolete and we are literally just hanging on until we can get something to work and hope that it doesn't break. There are a couple of other options that they are looking into. One of them is a black fiber, is what they call it, and it would essentially microwave to the Grinnell tower, and it is my understanding that there is already something place with the new radio system for that and Duane said that there is enough bandwidth left over for us to be able to jumper on with Zuercher if we need to and then they are going to go out and then go directly from that tower to the PD. The other option is to do another microwave system from that tower to the PD. The VPN tunnel seems to be the best option at this point. Based off of what we had before, here at the Sheriff's Office, using Iowa Telecom we only had 30 mb up and down and with the microwave it was actually 50 mb up and down between us and the PD so it was actually a little faster. We've since switched over to MCG as our internet provider and we now have 100 mb up and down, and the PD is in the process of switching to MCG from Iowa Telecom for the same reason, faster speeds. Right now, the courthouse is our backup, and they have Iowa Telecom and it is 100mb up and down. We have a third backup, which is a cradle point which runs off of cellular and we are somewhere between 143 down and 15 up is the last thing whenever he puts it up in the courthouse. What that means is that any time that we run out of internet at the Sheriff's Office is that it automatically goes over the courthouse internet, and then if the courthouse internet also fails, then it would go to the cradle point, which would still get all of the paging stuff out, and support the PD.

Someone asked "is it already up and running"? Meyer said, "so that it is with GPD here, and then failover to the courthouse. The only thing that is not up is the third option." Someone said, "so a month ago when the pages didn't go out, and the internet was down", Meyer "ya, so what happened", the person asking the question "so we didn't have three sources at that time?" Meyer "the second source hadn't been tested and it was somewhere in the IT world where a box didn't get clicked, checked, and so that is why it didn't work that time. That box has now been checked and everything should work". Question was asked "are you going to do any testing on that or anything?" Meyer advise that there hasn't been any testing set up on it for the failover, that they want to get that third one in place, but that he would talk with Galyn and see if he has something, and then he works with IP Pathways out of Des Moines, and they do all that and have apparently checked it since then. In the past all we had was the only single source. Having a backup just came in roughly two months ago, and we just got the backup in the MCG. So, MCG comes out of the south and Iowa Telecom comes from the west. Last summer we had the same issue for about a week with the paging and that was because Iowa Telecom had a line that got cut. So that is when we started working on trying to figure out what we were going to do for a backup. The cradle point is the third one and that is what 911 uses. If 911 goes down, then there is an antenna on the roof and that is what 911 uses as a backup, and currently that is our third option.

Massengale stated that if he remembers right, that Grinnell PD and the Sheriff's Office paid for it initially, and then we pay the maintenance on it. T. Kriegel stated that he thinks that 911 pays some of the maintenance on it. Massengale said that was how it was originally set up. Disney said that 911 pays for CAD and Mobile related charges on the Zuercher software maintenance for both GPD and the Sheriff's Office.

Massengale asked when will it all be completed to have everything up and running? Meyer said that we are waiting on GPD to get switched over to MCG and then they can do the tunnel. His understanding is that they are waiting on that because the speeds are too slow right now for them to do the tunnel. With the VPN the secured connection eats up a bunch of the mb when you are downloading, so they need that faster speed to make that work better is basically how they explained it to him. Massengale asked if there was any kind of timeline. Meyer said it is up to MCG at this point that he doesn't know that they have a timeline.

Encrypting Fire/Law/Ambulance frequencies on all radios –

Massengale stated that at the last meeting we discussed having two law radios and a couple of radios in each department and since then it seems like there are a lot of people wanting to look at it a little bit different. T. Kriegel stated that at the last meeting when we were discussing that and having trouble coming to an agreement, I said a simple fix would be to not encrypt law enforcement channels. It's a simple fix and we can keep on operating like we are and that's how Jasper County does it, and some of the other counties around us. Since the last meeting Grinnell law enforcement Chief of Police was advised that he was absolutely not going to be able to encrypt his radio, his channel, so I decided not to encrypt ours. So, this makes it all a non-decision as far as he is concerned. We can just go back to the original plan like we had set up with the RFP. Massengale asked if that would be to encrypt just one channel, and Paul said no, that there are three or four channels that are encrypted for law enforcement. Kriegel said he believes it is three. Kriegel went on to say, that is what we would revert back to, that is what the original plan was. That encryption, to everyone that is new to the meeting, the Chief of Police from Grinnell, Mac McClelland comes from a bigger department and has seen a lot of stuff and he thought it would be good idea since we were designing a new radio system to encrypt law enforcement. In hindsight we probably should have thought about that quicker, but we had to make a quick decision. We are still going to have the TAC Team channels encrypted so if we need something sensitive put out over the radio, we can and are going to in our law enforcement radios so that we can just click down one channel and go to any encrypted frequency and then we can get that information that is sensitive that shouldn't be out to the public. Massengale said at the same time you would still be scanning the fire channels, because I know that they were worried about flipping back and forth. Kriegel stated that they have operated that way forever essentially so that is not a game changer for them. It is a way to have an encrypted channel if you need it, and it's a way to get past this encrypted radio and its costs that associated with the encryption.

Massengale stated to bring some of you up-to-date, to do the radios now would cost \$50,000 and to do it later it would be about \$100,000. So, this was not in the radio project so we would have to find somebody to pay for it. T. Kriegel said so either Poweshiek County or 911 would have to pay for it. Massengale said that is correct.

It was asked/stated, so we would still do it like we do now, and then they could go to their encrypted channel and we wouldn't hear them? T. Kriegel stated that if there was a major event with other law enforcement involved, we would probably switch to an encrypted channel, and we would still have that inoperability. Meyer said and then the fire/ambulance would just say go to Fire Tac 1, law enforcement would go do their stuff and you would go do your stuff. It was asked if that channel would be on the pagers? T. Kriegel asked what channel they are asking about. Paul said I don't know who is asking, but those are different and that it is planned out to where fire has all the channels that they need, and law enforcement has all the channels that they need. Someone said what they are asking, is will Channel 6 stay the way it is, because it is nice when it is scanning and someone is going to a call and he can hear if a cop is already doing traffic control, or if we are going to give mutual aid to another department. Paul said, yes, you will still be able to scan the whole zone and that zone has 64 channels in it, but pagers are not programmed with law enforcement. Pagers will have fire only. Someone asked, why not. Paul said that is not a discussion for this meeting, but that we are not doing law enforcement on the pagers. T. Meldrem asked Paul if they will be able to scan the whole county like they can now. Paul said, yes, you will be able to scan all fire and EMS like you can now for the whole county. T. Kriegel then asked Paul if the fire departments were going to have portable radios. Paul stated, yes, they will be able to scan law enforcement on the portable radios but not the pagers that they carry with them daily wherever they go will not have law enforcement on them. T. Meldrem asked if any of the radios in the vehicles will have law enforcement channels on them. Paul stated, yes, the portable and radios in the vehicles will be programmed the same. T. Meldrem said, then we will be able to switch over to law enforcement channel if on an accident scene and be able to talk to them? Paul, absolutely! T. Kriegel, said good, better...better than what we had.

T. Meldrem said that they understand that when law enforcement is going to a standoff with someone that everyone doesn't need to know who it is, He just wants to make sure that if they are at an accident that they are able to communicate with law enforcement if they need something, and that is a big issue. Meyer said that fire would just radio dispatch and have them tell the deputy to go to Fire Tac 1, and someone else said that is just asking more of dispatch and Meyer said that they are already doing that now. T. Meldrem said that they want to cut the middle man out that they have problems with that now. Meyer said that is the way it is going to work. T. Kriegel said the only difference would be if we had a mass casualty or school shooting or something like that then it might be a different plan then. T. Meldrem said we all know easy is way better.

Massengale asked Paul if we are going to have extra radios that are going to be programmed with the encrypted channels in case of a major incident. Paul said that is correct. T. Meldrem said as long as someone remembers to grab them. If we have an incident on the other side of the county and ask for GPD to assist them and no one remembers to bring the radios what good does that do them? Massengale said that they will be in the EMA's possession. Paul said the likelihood for a fire department to have to go to an encrypted channel is very, very slim, so if anything, even if like on an active shooter incident when you don't have any warning, law enforcement is probably going to be on an encrypted channel, but fire and EMS is going to operate on doing triage and other stuff on a non-encrypted channel. So, since encryption isn't needed if there ever were a need, like the Molly Tibbets case, where people are out searching through cornfields and they come across something, then that could be a case when we would issue those radios out but that is more of a planned type of an event, not a no warning incident. Massengale stated and it would be a smaller group that would need them. Meyer said just like dispatch does now when patching channels together, they could patch a non-encrypted channel with an encrypted channel if needed as well. It isn't actually patching the channels together, it's called simulcasting and they can do that all at the same time on one system, and if they did dispatch and encrypted channel with a non-encrypted channel that can still happen. So that inoperability is still there.

Massengale stated this was all good discussion, and asked if anyone had anything else including those that were joining by zoom. It was then asked if EMA was going to be the only one with encryption on his radio besides law enforcement. Paul said that is correct, and Massengale agreed.

Meyer asked if we need to amend the vote from the last meeting. Massengale said yes, the board will take care of that.

Moore moved a motion to cancel the motion made at the May 1st board meeting approving the encryption on the additional radios and to proceed as the RFP was originally written and agreed on. Seconded by Sears – Motion passed. T. Meldrem said as long as we keep it simple, that is the best way, and T. Kriegel said that doing it this way will be the simplest and best for everyone and T. Meldrem agreed.

Jacob Patterson, Gilman Fire Chief said that he thinks the board is making the appropriate decision. He works for Marshalltown Fire Department full time, and they are operating the same way in Marshall County and it is working out well for them. He knows that everyone operates different, but if Poweshiek County were to encrypt Mutual Aid it would make it difficult for Gilman Fire Department to communicate when responding to a scene. He apologized for not being very involved in the past with this board, but wanted to chime in and agrees with the choice being made. Sheriff said "and we wanted to make absolute that Gilman could here". Massengale said it is important to take into consideration the surrounding departments that respond in Poweshiek County as well. Sheriff said, "to be honest the Chief and I didn't think it through far enough, and we certainly didn't want to make problems for anybody and after discussions following the last meeting, I thought then that the best thing to do is stay with unencrypted law channels, and if it is working good for Jasper County and Marshall as well, it should work good for us as well. So, this is an easy fix to just go back to the original plan, and everybody can work together like we want to work together. Massengale said this has been a good discussion.

Countywide Radio System

Paul said that all four towers are up and as far as he knows they are still waiting on the generators but the project will still move forward while they are waiting. It looks like all four sites will be complete by the end of June. They will go from installing the wires into the shelters and should be testing the system this fall and up and running by the end of the year.

Kriegel stated that he drove by every site today before coming to the meeting and there is one shelter in place on 480th Ave. They are supposed to be installing one more yet in May, so he expects to see another shelter somewhere but he doesn't know where yet. Paul said it is nice to see some actual construction instead of just drawings. Patterson said that you're going to love it, it has made a night and day difference in the clarity and ability to actually know what is going on. He wishes that they had done it a lot sooner. W. Widmer said that he had heard the same type of comments from Mahaska County and places that they used to not be able to get reception they are able to now. Paul, said that when he works in Mahaska and Jasper County it is night and day difference compared to what we have going on in Poweshiek County, and will make a great difference once we get on board. Kriegel added that we are going to have all new equipment from the Communication Center, cars, trucks, it will be fantastic. Patterson said that the biggest thing we may run into is what they did, and that is getting Racom down to get the radios all programmed, but they are busy and it is hard to get them nailed down and back in to get all of the radio channels set right but that is one of the biggest headaches they've had, and other than that it is great.

Kriegel left the meeting at 19:00. Massengale asked if anyone else has anything to add, and Meyer said based off of Patterson's comment that he knows that Racom is working on a wireless option too and that they are trying it out with a couple of department in order to be able to update them over the internet in lieu of having to come to Poweshiek County to do it and should help with issues like that as we get adjusted to the system and hopefully when we are up and running by next year that option will be a lot further along for them. Patterson said that will majorly helpful!

Massengale thanked everyone for their input and showing up, and stated that it is very helpful to get input.

Discussion

Next Meeting

July 18, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m. – Poweshiek County Public Safety Building

Meeting Adjourned:

Motioned by Moore to adjourn at 7:02 p.m., seconded by D. Kriegel. Motion carried.